

At critical junctures in this effort in Iraq, this administration has been extraordinarily insufficient in all of this. We had insufficient personnel on the ground with the collapse of the government of Saddam Hussein. We opened up regions of Iraq so that insurgents could begin to form and begin to conduct this attack against their own people and against our people. Too often we went out to Iraq, visited the country, and were confronted by our own soldiers who complained that they didn't have armored humvees and body armor.

I believe there has never been a really coherent strategic policy here. We heard the initial defenses of the approach to Iraq as we were going after weapons of mass destruction. They were not there. We are going to go after the heart of terrorism, when in fact the terrorists' connection to Saddam Hussein was tangential at most. Then, we are going to build an oasis of freedom and transform the Middle East. It is not an oasis today in Iraq.

Certainly there were not detailed plans. We entered into this occupation without sufficient planning, without sufficient resources in so many different ways. The faults continue to plague us today. Insufficient resources to run detention facilities contributed in a significant way to Abu Ghraib, and that, as even the President admits, has been an extraordinary blot on our record and inhibits us today in our ability to achieve a stable Iraq.

There is something else that you need to conduct military operations, and that is public support. Today, a majority of Americans would like to see a deadline to withdraw our forces from Iraq. They are not unpatriotic. They are not without grit and determination. They are terribly concerned, and they are looking for leadership.

But I believe this leadership comes in not adopting some type of arbitrary timetable or deadline; it comes from adopting what is the most coherent and realistic policy we can today to stabilize the country of Iraq, to assist them in this stability, and to begin the phased redeployment of our forces from Iraq to begin this year. To begin, not with an arbitrary timetable or deadline, but to begin with the notion that these decisions will be based upon the advice of military commanders and based upon the conditions on the ground. But we must begin. We must begin because we have to send a strong signal to the Government of Iraq that they must take their future in their own hands, that they must make difficult choices about their constitution, about sharing political power, about eliminating sectarian elements from their security forces, and a host of other difficult problems. This rests upon the fundamental reality of the situation. Ultimately, it will be the Iraqis who stabilize their country and reform their country. We can help. We have helped. But it is up to them, and it must begin now.

Also, this approach which we are proposing recognizes another reality. Our

military forces, our Army and our Marine Corps, have been under tremendous pressure. They have done a magnificent job. The young men and women who wear the uniform of the United States have performed in an extraordinary fashion. But for some of them, it will be their third deployment to Iraq. Others have gone to both Iraq and Afghanistan. The wear and tear on these young Americans and their families is significant. The wear and tear on our equipment is significant. There is a \$50 billion pricetag just to repair the equipment that has accumulated over the last several years in Iraq. So we have to recognize also that our forces need a signal that their mission will be coming to a conclusion, not in the next Presidency but, based upon a careful deliberation by the commanders, we hope in the near future.

We also have to recognize that our threats are not confined to Iraq alone. Today we are all waiting anxiously to see what the North Koreans might do with respect to a scheduled—or at least a tentative launch of an intercontinental missile. We are today engaged in serious negotiations with our European colleagues with respect to the situation in Iran. We have seen in the last few weeks an Islamic government takeover on the streets of Mogadishu and Somalia. We have seen other areas of concern and conflict. Our commitment in Iraq, frankly, constrains our flexibility to deal with all these issues.

Senator LEVIN and I have come forward today with a proposal that we believe will be an approach that begins a policy that we can achieve, that it is necessary for us to achieve, so we can move forward to begin to transition the burden from American military shoulders to those of the Iraqis. It begins with a phased redeployment which we believe should commence this year. Let me hasten to add again: There is no specific timetable. There is no deadline. This is based upon the advice of our military officers in the field. This is not cut and run or cut and jog or cut and anything else. It is an attempt to articulate a policy based upon the reality of Iraq, the reality of our present military forces, and the reality of a world which is engaged in conflicts in many different places.

In the past weeks, we have seen some progress in Iraq—the installation of a government, the naming of a Prime Minister of Interior, and the naming of a Prime Minister of Defense. We have seen the death of Zarqawi. But still we recognize how turbulent and uncertain and how hostile the environment remains for our soldiers and the Iraqi security forces.

We have about 127,000 forces there in the last 3 years, or more. We have seen more than 2,500 of these young Americans killed and more than 18,000 wounded. Their sacrifices have to be respected and honored—not simply with force but with wisdom and with a policy that will work, a policy that is attuned with what is happening in Iraq

and around the globe and not a policy based upon bumper stickers that have been trotted out at a moment's notice.

We recognize that we have an interest certainly in Iraq in terms of succeeding. And this plan we hope and we believe will be a success. We are putting together a plan—more of a policy than a plan—because the planning is the province of the President, as it should be, as Commander in Chief. But a policy of redeployment beginning now is the right direction. It will require the President to begin to outline those steps. It will also require the Government of Iraq to begin to take responsibility for their own situation. It will require them to begin deliberations for constitutional changes. These changes are necessary to ensure that this is an inclusive Government in Iraq, that the Sunni community feels that they can have a future in the new Iraq.

It also recognizes that we have to have a sharing of political power in Iraq so that Iraq will succeed.

In addition, the Iraqis must address the issue of sectarian militias, and the infiltration of security forces by sectarian elements have to be dealt with and dealt with decisively.

We also have to recognize that ultimately these decisions will be made and must be made by the Iraqis.

In this proposal there is a clear signal to the Iraqis that they must make these decisions beginning now for their future and, we hope, for a stable region and a much more stable world.

We also understand that we have to bring together the international community.

Since October of 2002, I have argued that this unilateral approach to Iraq is not destined for success; that we have to have a multinational approach to be successful. We have carried the burden both militarily and in many other ways. It is time that the administration engage and energize the regional neighbors and the broader international community to help address the issues that are presented to us all throughout the world by Iraq.

We understand, on a financial basis, that this is an expensive undertaking.

Originally, the administration suggested that this would be \$50 billion or \$60 billion. We understand now that we have already spent \$320 billion, and the end is not in sight.

In a recent study by Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel prize economist, if you added all the costs, all the costs of rehabilitating our equipment when comes home, all of the cost of veterans' benefits and caring for those who have served so well, the price will reach perhaps \$1 trillion, if our commitment extends until 2010.

Also, the international community has to do much more. The international community has pledged \$8 billion, and only \$3.5 billion of that money has been forthcoming. They need to do more, and we need to make them do more.